



Good afternoon, members of the Program Review & Investigations Committee and Education Committee. I am Edward W. Malin Ph.D. I am Director of the Isabelle Farrington School of Education at Sacred Heart University. I am also President of the AACTE-CT, an organization of the Deans and Directors of the Higher Education educator preparation programs in CT.

I'm here to comment on the BEST program recommendations 1) as represented in the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee (LPRIC) Findings and Recommendations: Approved December 18, 2007, 2) commented on by the State Department of Education Response to Recommendations of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee Regarding the Beginning Educator Support and Training Program, and 3) referenced in the legislation represented by raised bills **Raised S.B. No. 329 and Raised S.B. No. 330.**

Summary of testimony

The Members of AACTE CT agree in substance with the value of strong mentoring during teacher induction. Therefore, we can support raised bills 329 and 330. We are eager, as higher education institutions dedicated to educator preparation, to collaborate with the State Department of Education in the process of improving the BEST program.

We respectfully disagree with the described lack of clarity regarding our alignment with State standards.

We agree with the Ct SDE analysis that a "...comprehensive review of the alignment of all the accredited teacher

preparation programs with the state's teaching standards... " is unwarranted.

We disagree that the SDE developed draft should be made mandatory or the default requirement rubric for assessing student teaching.

We assert our continued collaboration with the education community in improving the process of developing effective educators.

Particulars

There are two specific areas that I wish to reference:

- 1) Recommendations regarding the BEST mentoring system and;
- 2) Recommendations regarding teacher preparation programs – their alignment of with State standards and their assessment of Student teachers.

BEST mentoring

The **key points document** of the PRIC report refers to the BEST MENTOR issues under the PRIC section II and in staff recommendations 3- 18.

The **SDE response** agrees in substance with the PRC, specifically (from p A5),

The State Department of Education (SDE) concurs with key findings of this report regarding the BEST program and seems in concurrence:

- strong multi-year induction programs for beginning teachers improve the quality of teaching, reduce teacher turnover and result in positive gains in student achievement; and
- the BEST Program portfolio is a valid and reliable assessment instrument based on Connecticut's teaching standards, but which can be strengthened and improved over time.

The Members of AACTE CT agree in substance with the value of strong mentoring during teacher induction. Therefore, we can support raised bills 329 and 330. We are eager, as higher education institutions dedicated to educator preparation, to collaborate with the State Department of Education in the process of improving the BEST program. Many of our member institutions do now include curricular materials directed toward the BEST program.

TEACHER PREPARATION ISSUES

The LPRIC report and the SDE response (but not the raised bills) also make reference to the higher ed community.

In the LPRIC report, Section I states (highlights mine),

Section I: Teacher Preparation

- Connecticut's teacher preparation programs are where future teachers are first instructed in how to teach and provided with initial teaching experience. The programs are required to integrate the state standards and BEST, but it is unclear to what extent this meaningfully occurs.
- There has never been a comprehensive, point-in-time review of all the Connecticut teacher preparation programs by SDE or any other organization to understand to what extent compliance occurs across the system regarding alignment with the state's teaching standards.
- SDE, in conjunction with teacher preparation programs, has developed an evaluation matrix for the programs to use in assessing the performance of student teachers against the state's teaching standards; the total number of programs using the matrix is not known by SDE.
- In general, there are not statistically significant differences in the rates most programs' graduates fail the BEST portfolio.

AACTE CT

We respectfully disagree with the assertion regarding lack of clarity. All higher ed teacher preparation institutions are using the CCT standards, both general and content-specific standards, along with national, content-specific standards, to guide their teacher preparation efforts, including the development and implementation of assessments for ascertaining/measuring how well candidates are prepared relative to the standards. Additionally, many are using BEST portfolio components to help train candidates and to help candidates prepare for licensure requirements. The review process for these programs is cyclic, rather than point in time. However, the program approval process administered by the CT State department of Education has demonstrated this compliance.

The LPRIC staff recommendations 1 and 2 also refer to the higher education teacher preparation community:

1. The State Department of Education should undertake a comprehensive review of the alignment of all the accredited teacher preparation programs with the state's teaching standards as contained in the Common Core of Teaching. The review should also examine how the program approval process can be used by the department of education to ensure teacher preparation programs fully align with the state's teaching standards.
2. The State Department of Education should require teacher preparation programs to use a standards-based student teaching rubric. The department of education should require each program to either adopt the rubric already developed, adding on to it if desired as currently is permitted, or to submit its own rubric for approval or rejection. If a program's own rubric is rejected by the department of education, the program should be required to use the standards-based rubric until a sufficient rubric is submitted and approved.

In the SDE response, their agreement with the PRC findings (p a5) included mention of the teacher prep process.

- Connecticut's teacher preparation programs need to better align their programs with Connecticut's teaching standards;

Later in the SDE response (page A7) they further describe their position (highlight mine):

"In addition to addressing the recommendations of the LPRIC regarding the support and assessment components of the BEST Program, we also want to comment on those recommendations related to strengthening pre-service education.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education undertake a comprehensive review of the alignment of all the accredited teacher preparation programs with the state's teaching standards as contained in the Common Core of Teaching....

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education require teacher preparation programs to use a standards-based student teaching rubric....

The Department uses the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation process as part of its state approval process for all teacher preparation programs. The process already requires a review of the alignment of the institution's program with state and national teaching standards. The Department believes that developing another review process would not solve the real issue of how well institutions of higher education make operational their programs and policies. Instead, we recommend strengthening the rigor of the existing accreditation review process. This effort would require comprehensive training of visiting team members, for which funding is currently not provided. We estimate it would cost approximately \$100,000 to initially develop and train visiting team members, with \$50,000 annual funding thereafter.

In addition, NCATE accreditation standards require that institutions develop a standards-based assessment of students' development of teaching competencies aligned with state and national teaching standards. While the Department has developed a draft rubric for use by teacher preparation programs, funding was never provided for full pilot testing, validation or adequate training of cooperating teachers and student teaching supervisors to use the rubric. Without adequate training, there is no way to assure the rubric is applied equitably and appropriately for all teaching candidates. Estimated costs are \$200,000 annually for the first three years to develop and validate a rubric as well as train cooperating teachers and student teaching supervisors in its use and \$100,000 annually thereafter to continue training personnel and monitor consistent use of rubric."

AACTE CT notes that Ct SDE is acknowledging that the program approval process already requires that we achieve alignment with state and national standards, and that developing a different process would not be better. However, they also acknowledge that the State accreditation review process needs improvement. They are requesting funding to train and sustain visiting team members. We agree with this analysis and commit to participating in the development of improvements.

AACTE CT also notes that CSDE makes reference to the draft rubric for use by teacher preparation programs. They also are requesting funding for "develop and validate a rubric." Some of our member institutions have adopted or modified this rubric for use in our programs. However, most of us disagree with the recommendation that this or any particular rubric should be mandated for all programs.

- Assessments within our programs need to align with a conceptual framework, unique to each institution. A general assessment instrument most likely will not capture what is uniquely important to any one institution. This is convergent with the NCATE program accreditation process to which our state program approval is aligned. Our obligation is to create teacher preparation programs that meet local and national standards but that are also authentic to our institutional identity.
- The language of the LPRIC Staff recommendation (number 2) appropriately states the requirement. "The State Department of Education should require teacher preparation programs to use a standards-based student teaching rubric." However, mechanisms for reviewing or approving an institution's rubric are not defined. Making the CSDE-developed draft rubric the automatic default without neutral standards for evaluating alternatives is not equitable.
- Specifically funding research to validate the draft rubric would create an even more weighty endorsement of the draft rubric and make its mandatory adoption more likely.
- We instead urge funding which is directed at supporting the development of better operational description of standards and improvement of support, incentive, and training for cooperating teachers and student teacher supervisors.

We -- as AACTE CT-- assert that we wish to participate closely in the process of improving the development of effective educators through the professional continuum.

Submitted 2/27/08

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